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ARGUMENTS

ON THE

ABOLITION OF THE LAWS

PROHIBITING

THE FREE IMPORTATION

OF

ENGLISH ROCK-SALT

INTO

SCOTLAND.

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TO THE
NOBLEMEN AND GENTLEMEN
OF THE
BRITISH SOCIETY
*FOR EXTENDING THE FISHERIES AND
IMPROVING THE SEA-COASTS OF THE KINGDOM,*
THE FOLLOWING PAGES
ARE
MOST RESPECTFULLY INSCRIBED,
BY
THE AUTHOR.

INTRODUCTION.

THE *Dutch* have been, till this time, the sole possessors of the secret of making salt of a superior kind, which they use for curing their own herrings, without allowing any of it to be sold to foreigners. They prepare it from the best *Spanish* bay-salt, with which they occasionally mix some *French* or *Portugal* bay-salt, adding to it a quantity of *English* rock-salt. The *Spanish* bay-salt, however, always makes the principal ingredient; the other sorts are added in a much smaller proportion, because they are persuaded

that the salt of that superior quality, with which they are accustomed to cure their herrings, cannot be obtained without the best *Spanish* bay-salt. In this, however, I believe they are mistaken: it is their method of refining that salt, which gives it so great a superiority. Their salt manufactories, besides, are built upon a very different plan from those of the *English*, and still more so from those of the *Scotch*, which in general cost but a few hundred pounds, whilst none of the salt refineries I have seen in *Holland*, when properly constructed for preparing their salt, cost less than from 8 to 12,000*l.* sterling; though built, as may naturally be supposed from *Dutch* frugality, in the most economical

nomical manner; and I am persuaded that it is not possible to establish such a manufactory for less, to answer the purpose intended; for it would not pay the interest, as the profit arises principally from the quantity manufactured.

If any person were to attempt in the present situation to make the same kind of salt in *Scotland*, though he could afford to sell it cheaper than the *Dutch* do theirs, yet he would never be able to sell it as cheap as bay-salt imported from *St. Ubes*. But should the Parliament grant the Free Importation of *English* Rock-Salt, the case would be quite different; salt of the best quality could then be made from

15d. to 18d. per bushel, which at present it would not be in the power of any manufacturer to sell, perhaps, for less than 3s. or 3s. 6d. The fish-curers on the coast of *Scotland*, finding salt equal, or superior in quality, and as cheap, or even a little dearer than bay-salt, would in a very short time think it their interest to give this salt the preference to bay-salt, the money now sent out annually for which to *Portugal*, would remain in this kingdom, divided between the salt manufacturers in *Scotland*, and the proprietors of rock-salt in *England*.

The salt manufactured in *Scotland* at present, though good enough for culinary purposes, is scarcely ever made use of for the table in any gentleman's

tleman's family in the country, (that prepared by Dr. *Roebach* and Lord *Dundonald* excepted) and wholly unfit for curing of fish and provisions. This is owing to its great impurity, bitter taste, and its easily melting down when packed with the fish, to which last fault even the better salt made in *England* seems in a great degree to be liable; and this is the reason that in *Scotland* at present, all the fish intended for foreign markets, and more especially for the warmer climates in *Europe*, are cured with bay-salt, though much dearer than the best salt made in *England*; whereas bay-salt, and more especially the *Dutch* salt, dissolves in a small quantity, slowly, and in proportion as the natural juice of the fish seems to require

require it; the rest remaining undissolved and entire. I allow that the bad quality of common salt may be of little consequence for culinary purposes; but all impure kinds of salt when made use of for curing fish or provisions, instead of preserving and giving them a fine flavour, spoil their taste and texture, and render them eatable only by the poor, who are unable to purchase any better.

That even bay-salt of different countries participates more or less of the above impurities, is a certain fact, and is the principal reason why the *Dutch* make use of their refined salt in preference to the best *Spanish* bay-

bay-salt, though prepared at a great expence and trouble.

The above mentioned arguments however, though perhaps evident to a technical chemist, may not be so to a person unacquainted with chemistry; I therefore shall explain a few necessary facts to illustrate what I have said, as well as what I have to say hereafter.

The *Dutch* were convinced by early experience, that it was impossible to cure herrings properly, so as to preserve them in high flavour for any length of time, especially for the market of warmer climates, without the very best salt. They at that time made use of the *Spanish* bay-salt, until at length

length they discovered their present mode of refining it, and giving it a quality before unknown. By which means they brought the art of curing herrings to such a degree of perfection, that no nation hitherto has been able to rival them.

In *Scotland*, until of late, nobody had an idea of any difference of salt: every body thought *salt was salt*: but the fish-curers as well as several gentlemen engaged in the improvement of the fisheries, were soon convinced of the contrary.

The common salt, as generally made in this kingdom, is a compound of many different substances, some of which

which are as useful and necessary, as others are hurtful and pernicious to the curing of fish. Pure salt consists of an acid and alkali, which have obtained from the chemists the names of marine or muriatic acid and mineral alkali; but salt manufactured from sea-water, salt-springs and rock-salt, always contain, besides the two above mentioned ingredients, a quantity of different earths, and other different salts: and in *Scotland*, for particular reasons, in addition, not unfrequently a portion of calcareous earth, or of real quick-lime, which gives the salt that peculiar pungent taste, which ignorant manufacturers praise to as ignorant purchasers, as a superior quality of their salt, being

what they call, very strong. It is owing to these impurities, earths and earthy salts, that the common *Scotch* salt has a bitter, sharp acrid, and fiery, or what they call a strong taste; that it looks dirty, and attracts moisture so powerfully from the atmosphere; and that, as I recollect, a vessel loaden with salt sent out from the *Firth* of *Forth* on speculation to *Konigsberg*, on its arrival, was all melted down to a useless brine, and thrown into the element from whence it was originally manufactured. It is owing to these qualities, that it is wholly unfit for curing. The *Cheeshire* and *Liverpool* salt is freer, though not altogether exempt from this fault, and is, for this reason, still far inferior to bay-salt,

salt, and much more so to the pure refined chrystals of *Dutch* salt.

As the law now stands, no fish can be sent to the *English* market from *Scotland*, cured with bay-salt, on account of the high duty to which bay-salt is liable. The fish sent to *Portugal*, *Spain*, *Italy*, &c. are cured with bay-salt; while those which are intended for the *English* market, are cured with *Scotch* salt, or with *Cheshire* or *Liverpool* salt, which by an act passed in 1786, is allowed to be imported for the curing of fish only.

Thus we furnish the *Italian* and *Spanish* markets, with fish of a most exquisite flavour, whilst we are obli-

ged to put up with the worst at our own tables, or at least with a much inferior sort. Nothing seems to be more absurd. Should we not think it highly absurd, if the *Chinese* were to enact a law, whereby they compelled their own people to drink all their bad tea, in order to sell the better sort to the *English*?

However, in the before mentioned countries, and even in *France*, where all our other manufactures are so highly esteemed, the *Dutch* herrings are preferred before the best cured *English*; and so long as there are any *Dutch* herrings in the market, nobody will buy the *English*. This evinces the superiority of the *Dutch* salt, and method of curing beyond any doubt:

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nor shall we ever be able to cope with them in the foreign markets, as long as our fish-curers are deprived of one of the most essential articles, I mean, salt of the best quality, at the cheapest rate possible. This, however, the *Scotch* will be able to furnish, if they obtain the liberty of importing rock-salt free into *Scotland*, and to supply the fisheries with the best, purest, and fittest salt ever made for curing fish, and exactly of the same quality as that made use of by the *Dutch*, at a very reasonable price. And if the *Scotch* fishermen and curers avail themselves of this advantage, and concur in doing themselves justice with regard to care, attention, and cleanliness, I am confident they will not only be able to

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rival and undersell the *Dutch* in this article in all the foreign markets, but we shall soon see salt fish made use of at table in *London*, as a cheap, healthy, and nourishing food, as well as a delicious luxury; and I dare presume to say, that fish cured with that kind of pure salt, when once known in the *English* market, will find a hundred consumers where they scarcely now find ten; salt fish of every kind being at present mostly confined, on account of their inferior quality in taste, to the lower or middling class of people in *London*: and no person, in the present situation, can have any fish cured with bay-salt, except at a very extravagant price.

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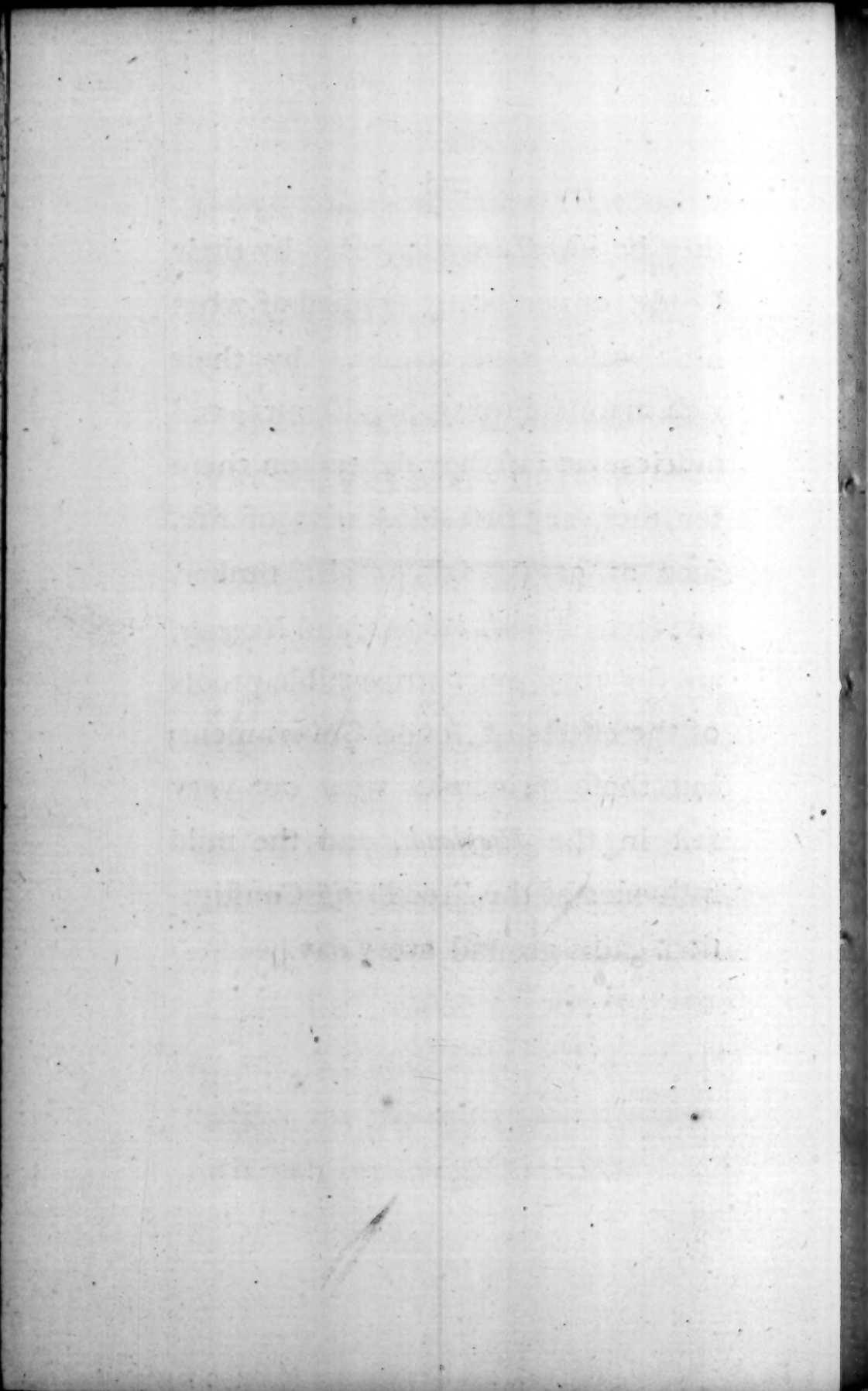
These and subsequent arguments, I hope, will be sufficiently decisive; and determine the Legislature to grant the free importation of rock-salt from *England*, if not to *Scotland* in general, at least to some particular specified places.

I would, therefore, farther propose, that this liberty may be granted to four or five different places, as it is now the case in *England*; such as to *Port-Seton* in the *Firth of Forth*, and to *Inverness*, or somewhere near it, on the east coast, to supply the *Shetland* and *Orkney Islands*; and on the west coast, to *Air* and *Campbell-town*; to *Tobermory* in the island of *Mull*, and to *Stornaway*, in *Lewis Island*, in the west; so that in each
of

of these places, salt-works, proper for making the species of salt required for the fisheries, might be erected.

By this general or limited indulgence of the Legislature to *Scotland*, a spirit of activity will be roused in the *Highlands* unknown since their existence; especially as, on the other side, it may with great reason be expected, that the proprietors in the country, and in the adjacent *Islands*, will chearfully concur in granting more liberty to their vassals; without which, we look in vain amongst a nation for industry, activity, and wealth. Slaves or serfs will always be inactive and indolent: and how should such men become rich? especially, if they

they be incessantly squeezed by their Lords, or constantly drained of what little cash they acquire, by their rich manufacturing neighbours; and much more, if they depend on them for the very first necessities of life, such as grain, salt, coals, timber, tar, &c. *Poland, Bohemia, and Hungary*, are the most uncontrovertible proofs of the effects of feudal Government; but these principles wear out very fast in the *Highlands*, and the mild influence of the Free *British* Constitution gains ground every day.



ON THE
FREE IMPORTATION
OF
ROCK SALT.

AMONG the various advantages which the hand of nature has bestowed on *England*, we find a bed or stratum of rock-salt, the depth and extent of which has not yet been fully explored. When this valuable substance was first discovered in *Cheeshire*, it was freely exported to all the different nations of *Europe*. But, as it was discovered, that the *English* rock-salt was not so pure as that of the salt mines

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in *Poland*, *Transylvania*, and *Cardonna* in *Spain*, it could not be used without being refined, or purified from the heterogeneous substances with which, when dug out of the bowels of the earth, it is mixed. For this reason, several salt refineries, soon after the discovery of this article, were erected in different parts of *England*: and, while its free and unrestrained exportation to *Ireland* and to every part of the Continent was continued, it was judged expedient to confine the traffic in this commodity, in *England*, to places situated within ten computed miles of the salt pit, and to the following places, where refineries were, at that time, erected; viz. *Heybridge*, *Colchester*, *Manningtree*, *Ipswich*, *Woodbridge*, *Walderswick*, and *Southwold*. The same liberty was afterward, by parliament, extended to *Swansea*, *Lawn-Marsh*, and *Neath* in *Wales*; and to *Holyhead* in the Island of *Anglesea*. In these

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acts mention is made of *Scotland*, not yet united under the same Government with *England*, in the following terms: “ 2, 3, “ Ann. Sect. 9, It is declared, that it is the “ intention of the acts, that any person exporting salt to *Scotland*, the *Isle of Man*, “ or *Jersey* and *Guernsey*, according to the “ directions of the acts, shall be entitled to “ a drawback of the duties in such manner “ as is directed by the acts.” Since the Union, no application has been made to Parliament for changing these laws; because there had not arisen any circumstances that could render it the interest of any individual, or the country at large, to wish for such a change. There was little or no demand in *North Britain* for more salt than was actually manufactured in the country by evaporation from sea-water, until the late increase of the *Scotch Fisheries*: nor was it till very lately that the art of refining rock-salt into such pure salt as that
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which is used by the *Dutch* in curing their herrings (which is the kind of salt that is required for the fisheries) occupied the attention of this country. It appears very surprising, at first sight, that *Great Britain* should have opened this immense treasure to all *Europe*, while she shut it up from her own people. But our surprize ceases, when we consider the circumstances in which the laws respecting the rock-salt were framed. The fisheries on our coasts, at that period, were so inconsiderable as to render the demand for salt of small importance.

But the fisheries of *Scotland* have, of late, so happily increased, that above 12,000 tons of salt are required to supply them, of which about 9,000 tons are found necessary to be imported annually from *Portugal*: because the salt now made in the country from sea-water is unfit for the curing
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of fish in a proper manner; and that, to improve it into such a quality as might answer the purposes of bay-salt imported from *Portugal*, would involve such an additional expence of time, fuel, and labour, that no manufacturer could afford to sell it at any reasonable price to the fisheries. But, were the free importation of rock-salt allowed into *Scotland*, salt could be made of the very best quality for the fisheries, at least one fourth part under the rate at which bay-salt is now to be purchased. A sum of money not less than 25, or 30,000 *l.* sterling, which is now sent out annually for bay-salt to *Portugal*, would remain in the country; and, what is still of more importance, our fisheries in *Scotland* would, by these means, be rendered wholly independent of foreign nations in time of war: and smuggling, which at present is carried on, to the West of *Scotland* by the

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the *Irish*, who have rock-salt and coals duty-free, to a very considerable extent, would be cut up by the roots. What other advantages the public would gain by a free importation of rock-salt into *Scotland*, will best appear from the following statement of facts.

Sea-water, on the coast of *Scotland*, contains about three per cent. of salt. The salt manufacturer is, therefore, obliged to evaporate out of 100 tons of sea-water 97 tons of fresh water, in order to obtain three tons of salt: whereas, if he had the use of rock-salt, he would, by dissolving this substance in sea-water before boiling, obtain out of 100 tons of this solution 23 tons of salt, and would not be obliged to evaporate more than 77 tons of water; which would, farther, be attended with a proportionable saving in fuel, time, and labour. For, in order
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to obtain, as above stated, 3 tons of salt from 100 tons of sea-water, about 48 tons of coals are required: whereas, with rock-salt, the manufacturer would be able with 48 tons of coals to make from 15 to 18 tons of salt. The great expence in the making of salt in *Scotland* operates, at present, as a great premium or bounty held out to the *Irish* for refining *British* rock-salt, and smuggling it over into *Scotland*.

From these, and other reasons that will readily occur on an attentive consideration of this subject, it will appear evident, that a general and free importation of rock-salt into *Scotland* would be of the greatest utility to that country, and of general advantage to the *British* nation. But, in opposition to a measure so liberal in its nature, and salutary to the public in its effects, it is contended,

1st, That

1st, That the revenue might suffer:

2dly, That the proprietors of the salt-mines, as well as the salt-manufacturers in *Cheshire* and at *Liverpool*, might be hurt: and

3dly, That the salt-boilers on the West coast of *Scotland*, and especially those on the East, on the *Firth of Forth*, would be ruined.

To all these objections, I hope, I shall be able to give a full and satisfactory answer; and prove, first, That by a repeal of the prohibitory act in question * the public revenue would not only be secured but augmented. Secondly, that the fears of the proprietors of salt-mines, as well as the salt-manufacturers of *Cheshire* and at *Liverpool*, are totally groundless; and, that the former, so far from being losers, will be thereby

* First of Queen Anne.

thereby materially benefited, while the latter shall retain the same degree of trade in this article as before; and lastly, that the salt-boilers in *Scotland* may either participate of the benefits arising from the refining of the rock-salt, in case of its free importation, or, if they should not chuse this, that they may remain in the full possession of the profits arising from their present manner of boiling, secure and without any disturbance; and that consequently, those idle and groundless clamours, especially when due regard is paid to the general benefit which would arise from such an act to the nation at large, can have no weight whatever either with a true financier or with a wise legislator.

The rock-salt is now exported free to the *Baltic*, *Holland*, the *Netherlands*, *Norway*, and *Ireland*; where, after being refined, it is made use of for culinary pur-

poses as well as for curing fish and provisions. From *Ireland*, after being refined, it is smuggled over to the West coast and islands of *Scotland*, in large quantities, to the detriment of the revenue.

This smuggling, considering the situation of the islands, cannot be prevented, but will certainly increase in proportion to the increased population and activity of the inhabitants of the Highlands and adjacent islands. But if a general and free importation of rock-salt were granted to *Scotland* by Government, this smuggling trade would, *ipso facto*, be annihilated; as the *Scotch* would be able to import the salt on paying a single freight, and to refine with their own coals this salt, which the *Irish* hitherto were accustomed to smuggle into *Scotland*, after having refined the same by means of *Scotch* or *English* coals, and even under the disadvantage

vantage of paying a double freight; one from *England* to *Ireland*, for bringing the rock-salt and coal; another, for bringing the salt refined from *Ireland* to *Scotland*. In *Scotland* itself there is no reason to imagine that smuggling of salt, from the salt-works, would increase to a greater extent than it is practised now, supposing smuggling now to take place: on the contrary, the experience of all ages and countries in *Europe* shews, that smuggling always diminishes in proportion as its objects grow cheaper, or become of less value; and we see it every where absolutely cease, whenever its subjects fall down to a certain price, while the punishments against the transgression held out by the law continue the same. It is the prospect alone of a considerable gain which makes the lower class of people risk their character and property.

But it may be safely affirmed, still farther, that the free importation of rock-salt into *Scotland* would increase the public revenue. The *Irish*, finding it no longer worth their while to smuggle, and the *Scotch* salt-boilers, watched as hitherto by the salt officers, not being able to smuggle any, or at least not more than they do now, all the salt employed for curing provisions, butter, and other culinary purposes, which hitherto paid little or no duty in the Highlands and islands, would of course pay duty, after the new arrangement. The smuggling of the ship Captains in their road up from *Liverpool* to *Scotland* can be easily prevented, by enacting, that every one, on his arrival in *Scotland*, be obliged to deliver exactly the same quantity of rock-salt which, according to his certificate, (or according to the certificate sent from the custom-house at *Liverpool* to the board of the Commissioners in *Scotland*) he had taken in at

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Liverpool, without any excuse whatsoever; and that in case of deficiency, he be obliged personally to pay, for every bushel or quantity deficient, the full *English* duty for pure salt at five shillings per bushel. This clause of the new act for repealing the prohibitory law, and allowing a free exportation of rock-salt, might perhaps enhance a little the price of the freight; but this would be a mere trifle, easily borne by the importer, render the Captain more careful about his cargo, and on the other hand, more effectually secure the public revenue.

Two other objections have been started of late concerning the revenue.

1st, That if rock-salt were allowed to be imported into *Scotland*, a great part of it would be smuggled without paying duty. A vessel, it is said, might clear
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out from *Liverpool* with rock-salt for *Holland, Norway, &c.* but instead of going to the place mentioned, go directly to the coast of *Scotland*, and run the cargo on shore, at or near any of the salt-works.

This too will appear to be totally groundless, if it be considered, 1st, That rock-salt is never packed up in barrels, sacks, or boxes, like brandy, tea, or other such articles, but is laid in a heap in the hold of the ship, like grain: 2dly, That it is from its nature, not only a bulky article, but liable to waste and damage, on being exposed to wet. The smuggler would consequently be obliged, first to pack it up in sacks, and then, (besides the chance of rainy weather, which is of very great importance) run the double risk of bringing it from the vessel a-shore, and of smuggling it from thence into the salt-manu-

manufactory or store-house, which is constantly guarded by the king's watchmen. Fifteen or twenty men would be required to land a few tons of this bulky article, and in this rude state, of little value, at the risk of being discovered not only by land and tide waiters, but likewise by the king's watchmen at the salt-works, or all those men must be gained by means of bribery. Now, any man may judge for himself whether four or five tons of rock-salt, thus smuggled in a night, would compensate risk, labour, the double bribe necessary in this expedient; and whether it could ever be worth while for any man of property to risk his character and fortune for such a trifle? But should he ever do this with success, he would yet gain nothing; for, after the rock-salt is thus smuggled into the manufactory, it is of little value, and not a saleable article; in order to become which, it must now be refined, and after
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being refined, smuggled a third time: or, a new set of men, the king's salt-officers, under whose care the salt must be delivered when it comes out of the salt-pan, must be bribed to let it go out of the warehouse of which they have the key, without paying the duty: for, if this last point be not gained, all his former care and trouble are lost.

This whole objection might be urged on much better ground at present against the *Liverpool* people, who carry out large quantities of salt, refined from rock-salt, to the *Baltic*, &c. This salt being a ready, marketable, and valuable article, and the vessel clearing out for *Konigsberg*, might with a much greater prospect of success and profit, run a-shore any where on the whole sea-coasts, from *Cheshire*, round *England* and *Scotland*, up to the *Shetland* and *Orkney* Islands. There is, however, to
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my knowledge, not a single fact *authenticated* to prove that such a thing ever happens, and the *Scotch* can never have half the temptation or opportunity which the *Liverpool* people, and more especially the *Irish*, have now of smuggling their refined salt.

The second objection lately started, respecting the revenues, is, that the smuggling of refined salt from *Scotland* into *England* would be greatly increased, because the *Scotch*, as it is said, besides paying only 1s. 6d. where the *English* pay 5s. duty, per bushel, by means of the rock-salt would be enabled to make the salt better, and cheaper than they have been able to do hitherto; and, that thus a great temptation would be held out to smuggle it into *England*.

To this, it may be answered, first, that the supposition is perfectly erroneous;

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that salt, made from rock-salt, is better, because it is made from rock-salt. The case is, that salt made from rock-salt is not a whit better than salt made from seawater. The good or bad quality of salt depends on the manner of procuring it, and, if this be the same in both cases, the salt obtained from the one or from the other will be the same, or very little different.

If the salt now made in *England* is, in general, better than that made in *Scotland*, its superiority is not owing to the use of rock-salt, but to the art and attention employed in preparing it. And the great point is, that the *Scotch* salt-manufacturer, in the circumstances under which he labours at present, is not able to sell his bad salt without loss, at the same price at which the *Cheshire* or *Liverpool* salt-manufacturer is able to sell his better sort with

with a good profit. And, in case the importation of rock-salt be allowed, he will be enabled to make good salt, of a superior quality, for the fisheries, *at a reasonable price*; but he will never be able to sell his good or bad salt cheaper than the *Liverpool* people: all that can be expected, is, that he will be able to sell the bad or common sort of salt as cheap as the *Liverpool* people sell, at present, their better sort, and that he will be enabled to sell a good sort of salt to the fisheries at a reasonable price, which he is now unable to do: and therefore, there can be no reason to suppose that smuggling will be increased.

But smuggling will be still more effectually discouraged, if rock-salt, instead of being allowed to *Scotland* in general, be only allowed to be imported into some few specified places, in the same manner as it is now allowed to some places in *Eng-*

land; and still more, if the importers to those places be restrained from selling any of their salt, thus refined from rock-salt, for any other purpose than for curing of fish, or, be obliged if they do, to pay higher duty.

After all that has been said, it must be allowed, that frauds may be committed. But it is not necessary, in the present argument, to prove that the arrangements recommended will preclude the commission of frauds. It is sufficient to observe, that the same means that have been devised for the correction of frauds hitherto, will be in full force hereafter: nor is there any reason to suppose, that greater frauds will be committed after the indulgence here recommended, than before. In order to obtain a great national benefit, it is not imprudent to incur some risk. The state of the revenue, the increase or decrease of the salt duty, will

will best shew whether new frauds have arisen or no. And even if the commission of new frauds should be clearly proved, it is not until it shall appear that they are wholly incorrigible, that the new system should be abandoned, and recourse had to the old one.

I come now to the second point to be proved, namely, that a free importation of rock salt into *Scotland* would not injure either the proprietors of the salt mines, or the manufacturers of *Cheshire* and *Liverpool*.

First, The proprietors of the salt mines in *Cheshire*, considered simply as proprietors, can have no reason whatsoever against it, but rather have the most powerful motive to support it, as, in case an act for this should pass, there will be opened a new and considerable market, which has hitherto not existed, for their rock-salt. But the same proprietors, if considered
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at the same time as salt-manufacturers, which I suppose is pretty generally the case, might be afraid to lose the monopoly of the salt trade they have hitherto enjoyed, and be obliged, perhaps, to divide the profits arising from the refining of rock-salt with the *Scotch*, who, for the future, would refine this article as well for their own home consumption as for exportation.

To this I answer: That the liberty of exporting their refined salt to *Scotland* has taken place only since 1786, and that this liberty is confined, as the act expressly directs, to the use of the fisheries. This clause they may, most likely, now and then evade, and thus enlarge their sale: but this proves nothing in their favour. The liberty of importing their salt being granted only, as far as I understand, by way of trial, might be taken away by
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Government to-morrow, and they would have no more reason to complain, than they had before it was allowed.

But supposing this liberty were continued, they would sell as much salt as before, by being able to undersell the *Scotch* in their own as well as in the foreign markets, if it were for no other reason, but for the mere difference of the prime cost of the rock-salt, and the difference of freightage between transporting salt in the raw and unrefined, and in the refined state. More rock-salt would certainly be in every respect consumed in this island than is consumed now, because, if the free importation of this substance were granted to *Scotland*, the *Scotch* would be enabled to refine from thence all the salt necessary for their fisheries, which they now import from *Portugal*, and which, as I mentioned

nentioned above, amounts to no less than 8 or 10,000 tons a year at present, and will, most likely, in a few years increase to 15 or 20,000 tons.

This reason for not allowing raw rock-salt to be imported to *Scotland* would militate much more against the exportation of that article to *Holland, Germany, Norway, and Ireland*; and I can maintain, I think, upon the most uncontrovertible political principles, that it would be more proper to prohibit the exportation of rock-salt in the unrefined state to those countries than to *Scotland*. Is there any man in *Great Britain*, who would not think it unreasonable and absurd, if the wool-growers in *Lincolnshire* had the liberty of exporting wool to *France, Germany, Holland, &c.* and should think proper to erect a woollen manufacture in their own country, to hinder the exportation of the
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raw materials to *Yorkshire* or to *Scotland*, where it may be most wanted, especially if it could be proved that they grew 10, 20, 100, or 1000 times more wool than they were able to employ, or use in their own manufactories. The case, if I am not mistaken, is precisely the same with the *Cheshire* and *Liverpool* people respecting rock-salt. Besides those gentlemen, being either the proprietors, or at the source of this raw material, they of course, as I mentioned before, will always be able to undersell every body else, and consequently, as long as the *Scotch* shall not be able to make salt refined from rock-salt, either cheaper or of a superior quality, they have nothing to fear from a repeal of the prohibitory act in question; and if either one or the other of these circumstances happen, I see no reason why Government should support any such unreasonable monopoly. But if we enter

a little deeper into this matter, we shall find that even in this case, if the *Scotch* should ever be able to sell salt refined from rock-salt cheaper, or of a superior quality than the *Cheshire* manufacturers are able to sell or make it---even in this case, I say, they will be considerable gainers. For, supposing there was a manufacturer in *Scotland*, who could make salt superior to what they are able to make, and sell that salt, in case he had rock-salt duty free as cheap, or cheaper than bay-salt is now sold for in *Scotland*, (for that there is not a shadow of probability of his being able to make salt, of a superior quality, as cheap, or cheaper than they can do in *Cheshire* or at *Liverpool*, I have proved before) what would be the consequence? This manufacturer would be enabled to furnish the fisheries in *Scotland* with about eight or nine thousand tons of salt, which have hitherto been annually im-

imported from *Portugal*, (as absolutely necessary for curing our fish for foreign markets) refined in the country from rock-salt, and thus not only prevent a large sum of money from going out of the kingdom, but divide the profits arising from his superior skill and industry with the *Cheeshire* people, who before had no share or profit in that trade, or article of trade whatever. This is not all: If the fisheries in the Highlands are not hindered from going on in their natural course, in a few years they will consume 20, and in ten years, perhaps 30,000 tons of salt, and thus the *Cheeshire* people will be considerable sharers in the fisheries; whereas, on the footing on which matters stand at present, they can have no claim, right, or hopes of any profit in that business whatever.

I shall now proceed to discuss the 3d point in hand, which is, that by a free

importation of rock-salt, the present salt-boilers in *Scotland*, and especially those in the *Firth of Forth*, would be not only materially injured, but totally ruined.

This clamour is entirely without foundation, as I shall fully prove hereafter. But supposing, a moment, for the sake of argument, that this was really the case, why should public utility and the benefit of the whole nation be sacrificed to the clamours of a few individuals, who at present make only common impure salt, which is unfit for the curing of fish, the future great staple commodity of the country? However, as this proposition might be thought too hazardous, or presumptuous, or perhaps, not altogether consistent with the principles of a mild or popular government; I shall discuss this point more minutely: and, in order to clear it up fully, it will be necessary to
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give a short sketch of the present method of making and selling salt in *Scotland*.

The greatest number of the proprietors of salt-pans, or salt-manufactories in *Scotland*, at present, are at the same time proprietors of the different collieries near the sea-coast, who employ their small coal for the boiling of salt, whence this kind of coal has obtained the name of *pan-wood*, under which it is generally known. In proportion to the quantity of this pan-wood which they obtain from their respective coal-mines, some of them have erected a greater or smaller number of salt-pans, which they keep on boiling during the whole year, and thus make as much salt out of the seawater as they can. If it happens at any time, that they have more salt in hand than they can dispose of in the country, they have agreed amongst themselves to sell
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the same to the ship Captains who come from distant countries, or to the fish-curers, if any one is found who will make use of it, at a lower price, or at any price they can get for it, and make up the loss, or indemnify one another as a body corporate, for the loss they may thus sustain, from the profits or higher price at which they sell the rest to the public. For this reason, the price of salt is constantly kept up nearly equal. As for exportation, they, to my knowledge, have none. Indeed it is not to be expected that any merchant of sense, either at home or abroad, should buy this kind of salt, when he can have salt of a much superior quality, and at a cheaper price, from *Cheshire* and *Liverpool*.

Now the argument of the *Scotch* salt-boilers is this: If we are able, and actually make as much or more salt than we
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can sell, what will be the case, if Government allows the free and general importation of rock-salt over all *Scotland*? The consequence, they say, is unavoidable: our salt-pans must be ruined; or at least, we shall for the future not be able to gain half of what we have gained hitherto. To this it may be answered, first, that if they now make, or could make more salt than they have a market for, it is not on account of the quantity, but on account of the quality of the salt, that their market is so confined; a clear proof of which is, that such a large quantity of salt is annually imported from *Portugal*, and for these last two years, not an inconsiderable quantity from *Liverpool*.

This complaint, therefore, is groundless, or falls upon themselves. For, were they to manufacture salt of a better quality, they would not only have a larger
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market at home, but probably likewise extend it abroad; and thus in both respects have a more extensive sale than they ever had, or can expect to have in the present situation. It is true, the price of salt would be lowered, if a free importation of rock-salt were to take place; and they, therefore, may say, "we are perfectly satisfied at present with the quantity of salt we can sell, as well as with the price we get for it: we do not wish to change our manner of boiling, and therefore desire no change of the laws; especially, as we may most likely by such a change, be put in a situation to gain less; and at any rate, we shall not know what to do with the greatest part of our pan-wood."

To this I answer:—The only difference occasioned by the new arrangements in question would be, that half, or two-thirds

thirds of the pan-wood, which is now consumed in evaporating the sea-water, would be saved, and the proprietors thereof be obliged to find out some other means of employing it, or to throw it away. This may be a grievance: but what is this grievance, compared with the benefit arising to the public from the importation of rock-salt?—But farther, this pan-wood will, perhaps, give rise to some new and useful manufacture: for it has been well observed, that things are discovered first, and their uses afterwards. If, however, no such manufacture should ever take place, the proprietors of small-coal would not, on this account, be in a worse situation than such of their neighbouring coal-proprietors on the *Firth* as have no salt-pans; or than those coal-proprietors who are distant from the sea.

Thus the whole argument turns on this

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dilemma:

dilemma: If a free importation of rock-salt into *Scotland*, in general, should be granted, the present proprietors of salt-works would be at liberty to make salt of the same quality that they have hitherto been accustomed to make; in which case they would sell the same quantity as before: or, a general alteration would take place in the manner of the boiling of salt; a salt of a better quality would be made; the market for salt, as the fisheries could be supplied with that article at home, would be enlarged; and the present salt-boilers would, if they chose to change their method of boiling, be sharers in this new undertaking. In either case, I do not see how they could be sufferers.

In order to illustrate this subject still farther, let us consider the same facts under the following view:—*Scotland*, at present,

fent, imports annually between 8 and 9000 tons of bay-salt from *St. Ubes*, which at the very lowest is 1s. 6d. per bushel, at 56 lbs. weight, and which therefore amounts from 25 to 30,000l. per annum ; but this will, in a few years, by the natural course of things, in all probability rise to triple the quantity.

The salt-manufacturers on the west-coast of *Scotland*, I am confident, will make little objection to the importation of rock-salt ; since, if that liberty should be granted, they cannot but gain, as the demand for their salt must absolutely increase : for at present, the greatest quantity of salt consumed on that coast, and in the western islands, is smuggled in by the *Irish* ; some is brought from *Liverpool* ; and a part brought from the *Firth of Forth*.

As the law stands at present, it is inefficacious for preventing the smuggling of bay-salt, as well as *Liverpool* salt. A large quantity of both is consumed for other purposes than curing fish, without paying the duty.

The salt-manufacturers in the *Firth* now sell their salt to the public at 1s. 8d. or 1s. 10d. per bushel; and what remains on their hands, to the ship Captains who come from the west-coast, or other distant counties, or to the fish-curers, at 10d. per bushel, which is below prime cost. This loss, however, is not a real, but only an apparent one. For, most of the salt-manufacturers, being connected together by a kind of corporation, they make up that loss amongst themselves, out of the profits arising from the salt which they sell to the public, by keeping the salt constantly at a certain price. Thus the real state of the
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matter is, that the people of *Scotland*, by these means, pay, as it were, a double duty on salt: first, the real duty laid on by Government; and secondly, a tax laid on by the salt-manufacturers in the *Firth of Forth*, in order to make up the profit for the salt, which they sell to the fish-curers, and to vessels from more distant places, at a lower price.

The salt-manufacturers urge farther, that they can never have a market for exportation. This position, I will venture to affirm, is wholly groundless. The possession, or the want of a foreign market will depend entirely on the price and quality of salt: and, if this be improved; supposing that there should be no export, the home sale will infallibly increase for curing of fish and provisions. As the law respecting rock-salt stands at present, it is exactly, as has already, but cannot be too often repeated, as if the

Irish

Irish had a premium upon every barrel of fish, pork, or beef that they cure. But, if the *Scotch* were encouraged by a free importation of rock-salt, they could cure meat as well as the *Irish*, their cattle being not inferior to those of *Ireland*. And thus would effectually promote that new mode of disposing of their cattle, which is very judiciously, among other practical hints, recommended to the *Scotch* tanners and graziers by Captain *Newte* of the *East India* Company, in his Tour through the North of *England* and *Scotland*.*

The quantity of salt now made in *Scotland* is about 300,000 bushels per annum, which requires about 100,000 tons of coal, and employs about 100 salt-pans: of the
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* See a Tour in *England* and *Scotland*, in 1785, by an *English* Gentleman: published by Messrs *Robinson*, *Paternoster-Row*.

above quantity, 15,000 bushels are computed to be used in a season, for curing fish, which are consumed in this island mostly, I should suppose, by the poorer sort of people.

It has been said, that in case the rock-salt were allowed to be imported, a very large quantity of coals would be rendered useless, a great number of pans would have nothing to do, and the people employed in boiling of salt be out of employment.

To the first part of this objection, I answer, That at present we go on in *Scotland*, with the use of coals, as our forefathers have done with respect to woods: we waste seven or eight times as much as there is a necessity for.

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Had Government in those times made the wise law to restrain the people from wasting of wood and timber, the proprietors of large and extensive forests would have found themselves greatly aggrieved; they would undoubtedly have complained in the same manner as the coal proprietors in the *Firth* might do in the present case. But who dares to say that our coal mines in the *Firth* of *Forth* are inexhaustible? And why might not a good and wise Government think, with regard to this point, on posterity? But there is no need to have recourse to any such coercive law. They say, that in case the rock-salt was allowed, so much coal would be rendered useless, and thus they would be obliged to destroy the small coal, or leave it under ground; the consequence of which, they say, would be, that the price of coals would be immediately increased in *Scotland*, and the public lose in
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this respect, what they thought to gain in the other. To this I answer, first: I verily believe that the price of coal would rise, if this depended upon them as the price of salt does: but this is happily not the case; of which we have had a decisive proof last Winter. The price of coals rose in *Edinburgh*, on account of the severity of the weather; indeed, there began to be a scarcity of coals. But as soon as this was known, in a very short time, a great number of vessels brought coals into *Leith* harbour, and sold them cheaper than those from the neighbouring coal pits. Thus, there is no fear of the price of coals rising in the country on this account. But, let us consider this point a little farther: notwithstanding the importation of rock-salt, there would be a great market, for small coals to the North country, for burning lime, where, for want of these coals, they are in many

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places not able to burn any lime: by these means, they would be enabled to improve their pastures. But supposing they had no such market, what must the other coal proprietors in *Scotland*, who have no salt-pans, or are at a greater distance from the sea coast, do with their small coal? We see that they do not give up their coal works on this account, nor do they sell their coals dearer (perhaps rather the contrary) and still find it profitable to work them. They make use of these small coals as well as they can, and what they do not consume in Summer, they sell in Winter to the poor people, who are glad to get them. At present, the poor people in *Edinburgh*, and other towns near the sea coast, are obliged to buy the large coals at the same price as the people of fortune, because they cannot get any at a cheaper rate, which falls very heavy upon them, especially

especially in a hard Winter, and where they have a large family. It has been said, that neither the poor people nor any body else will buy those small coals, because they do not cake like those of *Newcastle*. I allow that they will not answer for smith's forges, and other such purposes, but that they answer very well for the poor people, we see by their buying them, wherever they can get them, and I myself could not get any of them one Winter, from a place where I had had some before, because the poor people had been there before me, and bought up in a few days the whole stock: and they would do this the more readily, if they knew how the people in *Holland* and *Flanders* make use of the very dust or powder of coals brought from *Liege* or *Namur*, which are in no respect better than our *Scotch* coals: they make balls of them with clay and water, which they burn in their houses and chim-

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neys,

neys, as well as large coals. In some parts of *Scotland* they mix small coal with cow-dung, which makes a very powerful fuel. But supposing the present proprietors of the collieries in the *Firth of Forth* were not able to sell so much coal as they do at present, they will indeed gain less; but this is no loss to the nation at large, but perhaps rather a benefit to our posterity. And thus the great argument which has been alledged, “ that ruin would be
 “ brought on the coal-works, and the
 “ price of coals increased, to the preju-
 “ dice of the very country meant to be
 “ benefited, and that the North of *Scot-*
 “ *land* would be distressed by raising the
 “ price of their fuel, which, it was said,
 “ is a greater injury to the country and
 “ its improvement, than will be compen-
 “ sated by any advantages which it will
 “ receive from the reduced price of salt,”
 is false, absurd, and groundless.

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It has been wrongly asserted, that if nothing but home-made salt was used by the fisheries, the saving would be but a mere trifle, not exceeding the sum of 1190l.—This is a mere delusion. For supposing, as it is granted, that we make use of 8000 tons of bay-salt annually, this alone, at the most moderate rate of 1s. 6d. per bushel, in time of peace, amounts to 24,000l. the greatest part of which sum now goes out of the country.

With respect to the assertion, that the fish-curers would complain of the salt not being so fit for curing as the bay-salt—this would be the case only, if bay-salt was prohibited, and the *Scotch* salt remained as bad as it is at present. But I strongly contend, that bay-salt should be allowed to be imported, at least, as long as we are not able to supply the fisheries with a sufficient

cient quantity of home-made salt of as good a quality as bay-salt.

What has been farther observed, that it would be a great hurt to the fisheries to restrain them from the use of bay-salt, and oblige them to make use of *English* or *Scotch* salt. This, I readily allow, would be highly unreasonable, especially as long as we are unable to make salt as good as bay-salt. This, however, will not be the case, whenever we shall be able to furnish them with as good salt as the *Dutch* make, at the same, or at a cheaper price than bay-salt is sold for at present.

Thus, I think, I have fully evinced the three points which I intended to prove, viz. First, That the revenue cannot suffer by the free importation of rock-salt into *Scotland*; and, on the contrary, that there is every reason to believe, especially as population

pulation and luxury increase, that it will gain by it.

Secondly, That the proprietors of salt-mines, as well as the salt-manufacturers in *Cheshire* and *Liverpool*, have nothing to fear on account of their trade, that being constantly secured by the power they derive from their local situation of underselling any trader in this kingdom, who is not able to make better or cheaper salt than they do. And should such a person arise in any part of *Scotland*, who could make salt superior to what they now make, and equal to bay-salt for curing fish and provisions, this very person, by his new undertaking, would open an immense field for a new market for their rock-salt.

Thirdly, That the fears of the salt-manufacturers in *Scotland* are more imaginary

ginary than real. For the liberty of using rock-salt, being properly intended for the use of the fisheries, for which they now sell but a small quantity of their salt, it being unfit for this purpose, and this, according to their own confession, without profit, they may continue to make salt of the same quality as they have hitherto done, and supply the common market as before; or they may, if they chuse, make salt of a better quality, by using rock-salt, and thus share the profits of a new branch of trade, in which they had hitherto little concern, and in which they were, as they say, rather losers than gainers.

FINIS.

